

VZCZCXRO2515  
PP RUEHDBU RUEHFL RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHNP RUEHROV RUEHSL RUEHSR  
DE RUEHNY #0722/01 3231030  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P 191030Z NOV 09  
FM AMEMBASSY OSLO  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7982  
INFO RUEHKK/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 1374  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 0360

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 OSLO 000722

SIPDIS

STATE FOR IO/UNP (ANDREW MORRISON), NEA/IPA, AND EUR/NB

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/19/2019

TAGS: [PREL](#) [UNGA](#) [KPAL](#) [IS](#) [SY](#) [LE](#) [NO](#)

SUBJECT: NORWAY STILL DECIDING HOW TO VOTE ON ISRAEL -  
PALESTINIAN RESOLUTIONS IN UNGA

REF: STATE 118799

Classified By: Political and Economic Counselor Cherrie Daniels for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary: As of the morning of November 19, the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) was still undecided as to how to vote on the three UNGA resolutions into which Goldstone report language has been inserted; the Middle East section was consulting with the MFA legal department to consider the implications. While the Norwegians were receptive to our argument against anti-Israel bias at the UN, the counterargument of the official to whom Poloff spoke focused on the need to strengthen Palestinian moderates and an urgent need for Israel to stop expanding settlements in order to change the atmosphere. As for the three UN bodies occupied with Palestinian issues, our MFA interlocutor said there would have to be a "big change in circumstances" for Norway to vote differently than it has in the past. Post believes Norway's explanation of its abstention vote on the previous (November 5) UNGA Goldstone resolution indicates that Norway could be helpful to us at the UN on these issues if its delegation can be convinced that the resolutions are designed to politicize the atmosphere -- although they have a higher threshold for that determination than we do. End Summary.

12. (C) Poloff met with Torunn Viste, Assistant Director General of the MFA in the Middle East Section at 9:30 am Oslo time November 19 to discuss reftel demarche. Poloff began by thanking Norway for its explanation of its November 5 abstention on Goldstone at UNGA, which stated in part:

(U) "Norway strongly regrets that the main sponsors did not take (Norway's proposal for a limited resolution that would achieve broad support) on board. We believe that the failure to do so demonstrates that this decision is not only about protecting victims of armed conflict in Gaza, in Southern Israel or indeed elsewhere. We cannot interpret this as anything but a wish to preserve the politicization on Middle East issues that we see far too often. Yet again we are turning what is an existential question at the UN into a highly politicized debate. This is not in the interest of the victims we all claim to speak for. For this reason, we abstained on the draft resolution."

13. (C) Poloff followed with reftel talking points, tying together the politicization theme highlighted in Norway's explanation of vote to the overall dynamic at the UN. Viste said the MFA was still, at this late hour, determining how it would vote on the resolutions that vaguely or directly referenced Goldstone. She said that the Middle East section was consulting with the MFA's legal department. She mentioned that the EU planned to abstain on the so-called "practices-works" resolution, but would vote yes on the

"practices-practices" resolution, as an agreement had been reached with the Palestinian delegation to soften the language. When asked what affect the EU's decision will have on Norway, Viste said, "We make up our own mind and don't feel bound," although she added it would be unlikely that Norway would arrive at a different interpretation of the text itself than the EU. Simultaneously, she suggested that the EU sees the Goldstone-related language as directed solely at the parties and is "non-endorsing" of the report. She expressed some doubt that this was actually the case. Comment: This gave poloff the impression that the MFA legal department's interpretation will indeed carry great weight. End comment.

14. (C) When asked for her views on the main thrust of our talking points, about overarching bias at the UN, Viste punted by saying that "our main message is directly to the parties: Israel and the Palestinians." She noted that the MFA will release a statement today (November 19) on Israel's Gilo settlement, which she described as an unhelpful development. Expressing worry about the stability of the Palestinian Authority (PA), she described a scenario in which President Abbas would be replaced by the Hamas-affiliated President of the PLC, which would create "tremendous" problems for the PA, as the U.S. and EU would be forced to stop supporting it. Responding very obliquely to our points, she said, "this is not a time to be weakening the moderates on the PA side." She further listed several steps Norway viewed as required to get the peace process moving again, which were (a) a common understanding of the terms of reference, (b) an end to Israeli settlement expansion, (c) an end to incursions into "Area A," (d) increased work permits

OSLO 00000722 002 OF 002

for Palestinians, and (e) increased freedom of movement for Palestinians -- all of which measures she described as "confidence building."

15. (C) Comment: Post believes the Norwegians are of two minds on the current anti-Israel UNGA resolutions. On the one hand, they find Israel's continued unhelpful behavior (e.g. settlement building) to be unworthy of a "reward" of less harsh treatment at the UN. On the other hand, they realize that bias at the UN does not advance peace in the region. As their November 5 explanation of vote on the UNGA Goldstone resolution shows, Norway can be convinced to abstain from resolutions which the GON thinks are motivated by a "wish to preserve the polarization" of the debate; but as their practice shows, they do not necessarily abstain from resolutions which have that same effect collaterally. Further discussions by USUN with the Norwegian delegation in New York would increase the chance of another abstention by the GON. Any consultations with the Norwegians should focus on the Norwegians' own stated concern about polarization and politicization being unhelpful to our shared goal of advancing the chances of relaunching peace negotiations. End Comment.  
WHITE